California Native Peoples

IDENTITY

Today, Native people across California are reclaiming their identity by using their traditional name for themselves, rather than the name the Spanish or Americans gave them.

If a Native person identifies themselves as Tongva rather than Gabrieleño, Shmuwich rather than Barbareño, or Iviatim rather than Cahuilla, which is correct? They are all correct, because identity is a deeply personal choice and can only be made by an individual.

Tribal names across California are often used as a broad term for a cultural region: Yokut, Chumash, and Ohlone are shown above as examples of this.

For example, Yokut simply means "people," and within Yokut country, people identify with their specific language/cultural groups.

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